

M/V COLLEEN  
(Chesapeake Deadrise *Colleen*)  
Tall Timbers  
St. Mary's County  
Maryland

HAER MD-173  
*HAER MD-173*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

### *M/V COLLEEN* (Chesapeake Deadrise *Colleen*)

HAER No. MD-173

<b>Location:</b>	Potomac River, Tall Timbers, St. Mary's County, Maryland
<b>Date of Construction:</b>	1962
<b>Rig/Type of Craft:</b>	Chesapeake Bay Deadrise
<b>Trade:</b>	Recreation / Fishing
<b>Registration Number:</b>	MD 4717 J
<b>Principle Dimensions:</b>	Length: 37'-7"; Beam: 4'-10"; Depth: 2'-3"
<b>Designer/Builder:</b>	William T. "Bill" Deagle
<b>Original Owner:</b>	Paul L. Booze
<b>Present Owner:</b>	Thomas M. "Mickey" O'Donnell
<b>Present Use:</b>	Recreational Boating / Fishing
<b>Significance:</b>	The M/V <i>Colleen</i> is a representative example of the wooden boat-building tradition in southern Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay.

#### **Description:**

The vessel *Colleen* is a Chesapeake-style deadrise design with flare in the forward portion of the hull and tumblehome towards the stern. The bottom is diagonally cross-planked with white cedar and the sides are planked for and aft with the same. Frames are white oak and spaced approximately 18" on center.

*Colleen's* appearance is largely unchanged, although some of the original materials have been replaced over time. A new deck has replaced the redwood original, although the cabin top is still of that material. The white cedar bottom planking was replaced with new planking of the same, but stainless steel fasteners replaced the earlier galvanized variety. The transom was originally of clear-finished mahogany but is now painted to resemble mahogany, and the original trademark wooden Sampson post has been replaced by a metal cleat. The engine was originally a Chrysler 318 V-8 marinized engine and has been replaced by a newer version of the same engine, although the transmission dates from the 1960s. She still retains her "Deagle step," where the floorboards in the cockpit aft were raised to accommodate the two exhaust pipes leading to the transom.

## History:

The motorboat *Colleen* was built in 1962 by William T. "Bill" Deagle of Tall Timbers, in St. Mary's County, Maryland. Bill Deagle (September 29, 1925–September 25, 2007) was the son of William H. Deagle and his wife, Mary Vivian Purcell Deagle. William H. Deagle moved from Deltaville, Virginia, to St. George Island, St. Mary's County, in the early 1920s, where Bill Deagle was born. The elder Deagle later moved to nearby Tall Timbers and worked at the boat shop at the Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, for many years.

Bill Deagle developed his father's interest in boats and boatbuilding and started a boatbuilding and repair business on a cove of St. George Creek in Tall Timbers. He married Janice Marie Deagle in 1961. Bill Deagle built his first boat around 1941, at the age of 16. Like his father, Bill Deagle went to work at the naval air station but started building boats regularly in the 1950s, mainly work skiffs. He went on to become one of the most prolific and respected boatbuilders in Southern Maryland, and may have built over 250 boats, mostly in the 1960s and 1970s.

Deagle was a man of few words, and preferred to work alone, although his brother, Charles, helped with the painting. The size of boats ranged from skiffs to one approaching fifty feet in length, mainly in the cross-planked style. His semi-V hulls were usually made from white cedar, making them lighter and higher in the water, with white oak for the keel and frames. Later boats developed more flare and an upswept bow, and lost the tumble home in the stern. The inside of his boats were usually painted in "Deagle green," a hue of his own creation. Larger boats were built outside and launched without cabins; they were finished off in the water. Smaller ones were completed in his boatshop, and launched using a system of metal rollers. The bottom was painted before launching. New boats were allowed to swell-up for a few days then hauled on the railway and another coat of bottom paint applied. Deagle insisted on launching boats on his own, without help.

Deagle's last boat was a 44' deadrise fishing boat for Charles Carruth, bearing the name *Concrete Lady* (the owner has a concrete business). Deagle built the hull in 1998, and the cabin and topsides were completed elsewhere. He had another large boat in frame, but she was never completed after he became sick. .

Deagle's two railways were kept busy with maintenance and repair work; flat-head Ford engines provided the power for the gears. Bill Deagle repaired any damage while brother Charles Deagle painted up to the rail. Bill Deagle passed away in 2007, and his old boatshop is falling down, but the name is preserved in Deagles Boatyard Road and in his boats, many of which are still in service.

A fine example of Bill Deagle's boatbuilding skill is the recreational motorboat *Colleen*. She was completed in 1962 to Deagle's own account, and sat in the water at the boatyard until purchased in 1963. The new owner bought the boat for her boyfriend, but shortly after the pair split up and the boat was re-acquired by Deagle. Around 1965 she was bought by Paul L. Booze of Tall Timbers and Vienna, Virginia, who registered the boat with the state of Maryland for the

first time. She also acquired the name *Detsie B*, after Booz's wife. In 1978, Booze sold his house and boat, and the latter was bought by Thomas M. O'Donnell and renamed *Colleen*. Despite building hundreds of boats, Bill Deagle retained a warm spot for the *Colleen*, once saying that she was the "smoothest" boat he ever built, as the 37' craft slid through the water so easily. Every year for most of her life, the boat returned to Deagle's railway, spending about a week out of the water for annual haul-out.

Thomas O'Donnell uses the *Colleen* mainly for recreation, although he did employ her in charter fishing for about five years, based out of Tall Timbers. *Colleen* has been part of the family for over thirty years, never straying far from her birthplace in Tall Timbers.

**Sources:** Interviews with current and long-time owner, Thomas M. O'Donnell.

**Historian:** Data compiled by Richard Dodds, 2009

### **Project Information:**

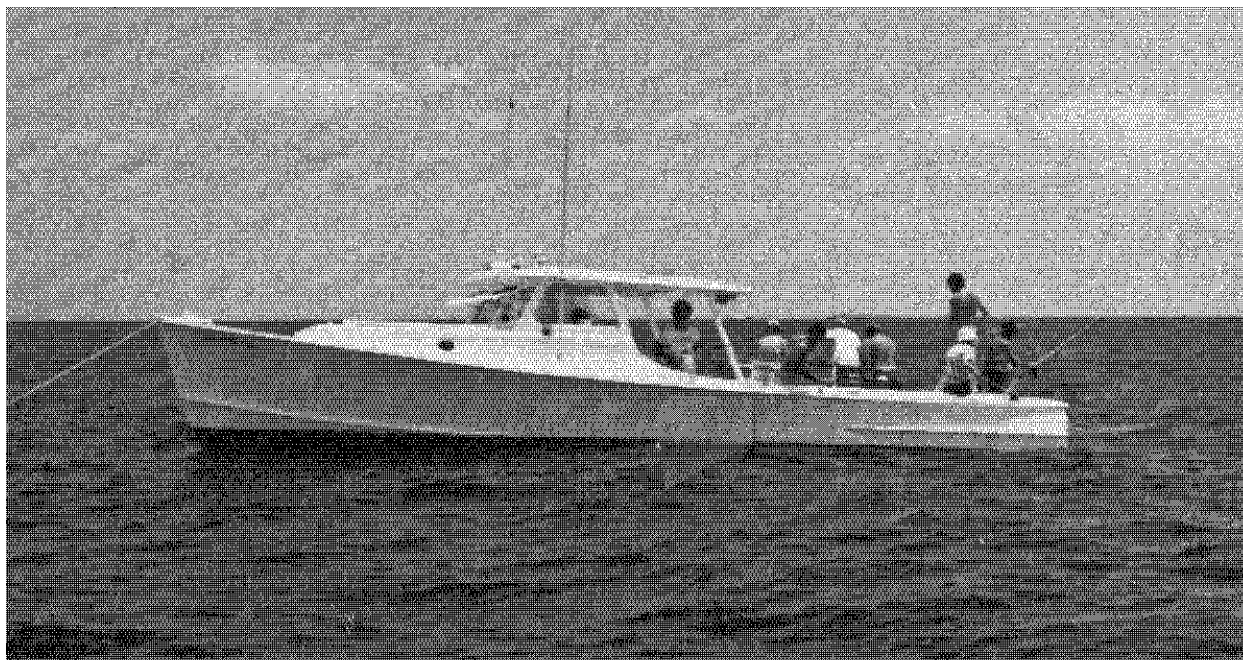
The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) is a long-range program that documents and interprets historically significant engineering sites and structures throughout the United States. HAER is part of Heritage Documentation Programs (Richard O'Connor, Manager), a division of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The HAER Maritime Program is managed by Todd Croteau, HAER Architect. The Southern Maryland Boat Builders project was funded in 2009 by the Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland. The historical data was prepared by Richard Dodds, Curator of the Calvert Marine Museum. Drawings and large-format photographs were prepared by Todd A. Croteau. George Surgent, Calvert Marine Museum, assisted with fieldwork.

**Figure Pages:**

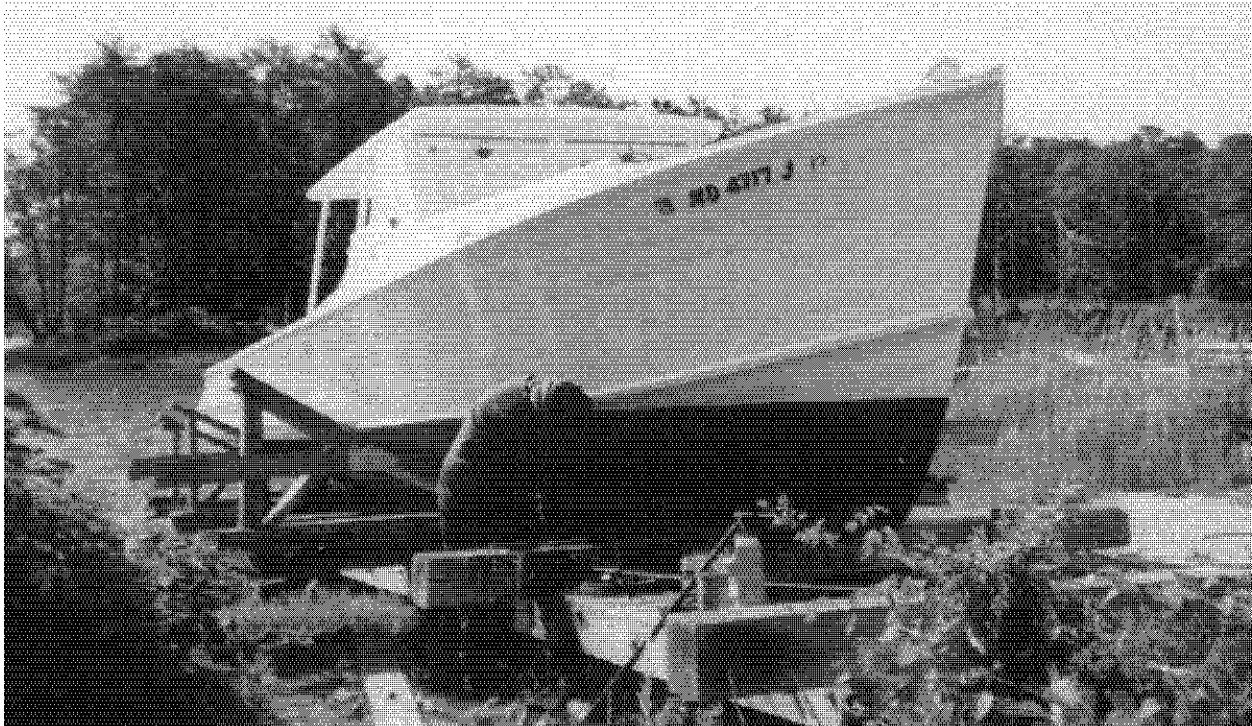
**Figure 1:** Bill Deagle (left) and son, Lee (right), 1999. Courtesy of Janice Deagle.



**Figure 2:** M/V *Colleen* at anchor in the Potomac River, ca.1970s. Courtesy Thomas O'Donnell.



**Figure 3:** M/V *Colleen* hauled for annual maintenance at Deagle's railway, ca. 1970s. Courtesy Thomas O'Donnell.



**Figure 4:** M/V *Colleen* at O'Donnell residence, ca. 1970s. Courtesy Thomas O'Donnell.

